

Dollars on ice, pennies plentiful, quarters hot

By Roger Boye

Nearly three out of every five Susan B. Anthony dollars produced by Uncle Sam continue to tarnish in government storage vaults, reports Mrs. Donna Pope, director of the United States Mint.

Americans still scorned the coins during 1982, forcing bureaucrats to move the Susie B's from "ready inventory" to "deep storage," she told members of a House subcommittee earlier this month. Workers made about 865 million Anthony coins during the three-year experiment that ended in 1981, but 500 million of those are "salted away."

Mrs. Pope also said that for the first time in at least three years, there is no known shortage of Lincoln cents in the U.S., according to a hobby-publication summary of her testimony. She credits the mint's increased production efforts for the penny availability.

Meanwhile, video games and 25-cent local telephone calls in some areas have greatly boosted the demand for quarters, she said.

● Experts are blaming inflation and the sour economy for a surge in the counterfeiting of U.S. currency.

Secret Service agents seized a record \$82 million in funny money during the government's 1982 fiscal year, up more than 40 percent from the previous 12 months. The bogus bills resulted in 2,225 arrests and raids on more than 85 counterfeiting operations.

Agents say that much of the forged money follows the drug trade, being passed at drug entry points in Los Angeles, Miami and New York. They also report a hefty increase in bogus \$100 bills, indicating that inflation has caught up even with this "industry."

All but \$8.6 million of the fake bills in 1982 were seized before the forgers could spend them.

● An influential hobby newspaper wants Uncle Sam to revamp the designs on all circulating coins, insisting that Abe Lincoln et al have become stale.

"Our current coinage indicates cultural stagnation," writes Numismatic News. "The George Washington commemorative half dollar let us know that there is still talent at the mint."

The editorial lacks detailed suggestions for new designs, but it says that the anniversaries of great events—such as the 1987 bicentennial of the writing of the Constitution—could be reflected on coins.

"Change should not stem solely from the desire to create numismatic death masks of recently departed leaders," the editorial stated, referring to the birth of the Kennedy half dollar in 1964 and the Eisenhower dollar in 1971.